



## The Social Contract

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, April 04, 2011

In society we have chosen to give up some of our liberty or ability to do anything we want for the trade off of having more opportunity under law. If we do not like the rules of society than we can move away to a remote mountain and have more freedom, but one would give up certain benefits we have in society based on law.

The social contract is reinforced through friends, family, neighbors and those who interact with us in society. However, the enforcement is done primarily by our law enforcement personnel and internationally by our military.

Police are the ones responsible to respond when individuals choose to cause harm to others' physical well being. Without adequate police, people may choose to break the contract, whether it be by committing a robbery, an assault or murder. From my viewpoint, police maintain the social contract. No one else carries the authority to do so, and ideally, always in a fair manner, which carries a high level of responsibility. A high level of responsibility needs to be compensated well, in part to avoid temptations.

In comparison to other city departments, the police department is the only one that maintains order so those who are weak do not get picked on and those that are law abiding can go about their way. Would we want to return to the Wild West when gun fights occurred outside the saloon between individuals? Who would want to worry about those things today at Happy Hour? Police on patrol deter crime by simply being visible. This deterrence, I believe, leads to less incidents that require emergency services since the inhibition of criminal behavior means less use of the 911 system.

Government does have enforcement through regulation, but only law enforcement really enforces the regulation with the possible outcome of incarceration. It is a great power and must always be overseen by civilians who allow autonomy but expect fairness to be carried out.

Sadly, during these years of low revenue and escalating pension costs we must always consider what we can afford. There is a higher cost to being out of control. The social contract extends to our police, as that they must be diligent, be fair, and understand fiscal realities we face, and thus our ability to pay. At the same time, the policy makers must prioritize with the social contract in mind, not to be held hostage but to always put this in the balance with other choices.

Technology can help with enforcement by using surveillance cameras to ticket red-light runners, capture vandals on video to prosecute property crimes and use video footage for gathering evidence for prosecution of other types of crimes. The ability to maintain a civil society will evolve with technology. If we do not accept technology than we will fall short of our goals since we will never have police covering all places all the time.

In other matters: Tonight at City Hall there will be a showing of the documentary film, *Bag It*, with a discussion to follow with the Director of Environmental Services. The film presents the impact of plastics in society and their ramifications to our health. To learn more email [tina.west@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:tina.west@sanjoseca.gov)

Congratulations to San Jose Made and San Jose Eats who brought what seemed to be a few thousand people to Downtown on Saturday afternoon for a pop-up retail and food truck event. The event also had the impact of filling every restaurant in San Pedro Square. A sign posted out front of one restaurant read: Closed-Out of Food.

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